

## Rollins College Rollins Scholarship Online

---

### Faculty Publications

---

4-2018

# Occupying and Transcending a Provincial See: The Career of Euthymios Malakes

Hannah Ewing

*Rollins College*, [hewing@rollins.edu](mailto:hewing@rollins.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarship.rollins.edu/as\\_facpub](https://scholarship.rollins.edu/as_facpub)



Part of the [Byzantine and Modern Greek Commons](#)

---

### Published In

Hannah Ewing, "Occupying and Transcending a Provincial See: The Career of Euthymios Malakes," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 42:1 (April 2018): 58-78. <https://doi.org/10.1017/byz.2017.36>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Rollins Scholarship Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Rollins Scholarship Online. For more information, please contact [rwalton@rollins.edu](mailto:rwalton@rollins.edu).

## Occupying and Transcending a Provincial See: The Career of Euthymios Malakes

Hannah Ewing  
Rollins College  
hewing@rollins.edu

**Abstract:** Despite a distinguished reputation as an orator and bishop in his own time, comparatively little scholarship focuses upon Euthymios Malakes, metropolitan of Neopatras during the later twelfth century. Using his extant works and contemporary sources, this article reconstructs elements of Malakes' career in both Constantinople and Hellas. He was active in each, balancing his intellectual credentials, participation in synods, and elite connections to the capital with immersion in more local contests. This combination allowed him to expand his pursuits and reputation beyond his minor see, into *both* the capital and elsewhere in the province.

**Keywords:** Euthymios Malakes; metropolitans; twelfth century; Neopatras; Hellas and Peloponnesos; Constantinople

Twelfth-century provincial bishops feature prominently in studies of Byzantium. These men shed light on broad administrative, ecclesiastical, and cultural issues of their day, while also serving as key witnesses to specific emperors, controversies, markets, networks, and literary communities. As such, episcopal figures—from Eustathios of Thessaloniki, Georgios Tornikes of Ephesos, and Michael Choniates of Athens, to the subject of this article, Euthymios Malakes of Neopatras in central Greece—inform the scholarship of, among others, Michael Angold,<sup>1</sup> Alan Harvey,<sup>2</sup> Anthony Kaldellis,<sup>3</sup> Alexander Kazhdan,<sup>4</sup> and Paul Magdalino.<sup>5</sup> These bishops have likewise been studied as individuals: Michael Choniates, in particular, has attracted

---

\* Grateful thanks to the anonymous reviewers, Anthony Kaldellis, David Brakke, Kyle Shimoda, and the audience at the 2013 Byzantine Studies Conference for their various feedback and valuable assistance along the way.

<sup>1</sup> M. Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204: a political history*, 2nd edn (London 1997) 260-93, 311-6; *Church and society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081-1261* (Cambridge 1995) 139-262.

<sup>2</sup> A. Harvey, *Economic expansion in the Byzantine Empire, 900-1200* (Cambridge 1989) 120-97.

<sup>3</sup> A. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: the transformations of Greek identity and the reception of the classical tradition* (Cambridge 2007) 225-316.

<sup>4</sup> A. Kazhdan and A. Wharton Epstein, *Change in Byzantine culture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries* (Berkeley 1985); Kazhdan and S. Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine literature of the eleventh and twelfth centuries* (Cambridge 1984) 115-95.

<sup>5</sup> Magdalino, *The empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180* (Cambridge 1993).

significant attention.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, Angold profiled eight provincial bishops at length, using their lives and experiences to demonstrate how ecclesiastical networks tied the empire together in the eleventh through thirteenth centuries.<sup>7</sup> However, most twelfth-century episcopal scholarship is inherently fragmentary: historians can reconstruct aspects of prominent metropolitans' careers—e.g., the administrative, oratorical, and/or judicial angles—but seldom are there enough surviving sources to reconstitute a full portrait. Angold proposes that the only solution to this problem is to assemble multiple partial studies in order to reconstruct a broad understanding of the backgrounds, roles, and ideals of these bishops.<sup>8</sup> To this end, scholars must collect as detailed information on as many bishops as possible in order to reassemble the most accurate picture of episcopacy under the Komnenian and Angelian dynasties.

Among twelfth-century bishops with extant writings, one man in particular—Euthymios Malakes, metropolitan of Neopatras—has largely escaped sustained attention. He has primarily appeared as a voice on the world around him, for example on Manuel I Komnenos, Seljuq wars, and court rhetoric.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, he is often known in modern scholarship as the correspondent of Eustathios of Thessaloniki<sup>10</sup> and Michael Choniates.<sup>11</sup> Few studies have focused upon Malakes himself; the most direct biographical treatment of the author is a 1934 essay by Georg Stadtmüller, published as an appendix to his monograph on Michael Choniates—a placement

---

<sup>6</sup> E.g., I. C. Thallon, *A medieval humanist: Michael Akominatos* (New Haven 1923); G. Stadtmüller, *Michael Choniates: metropolit von Athen (ca. 1138-ca. 1222)* (Rome 1934); J. Hussey, *Church and learning in the Byzantine Empire, 867-1185* (London 1937) 103-16; Angold, *Church and society*, 197-212; Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, 217-33; T. Shawcross, 'Golden Athens: episcopal wealth and power in Greece at the time of the crusades', in N. Chrissis (ed.) *Contact and conflict in Frankish Greece and the Aegean, 1204-1453* (Aldershot 2014) 65-95.

<sup>7</sup> Angold, *Church and society*, 158-262. He profiles Theophylact of Ohrid, Michael Italikos, Georgios Tornikes, Eustathios of Thessaloniki, Michael Choniates, John Apokaukos, George Bardanes, and Demetrius Chomatianos.

<sup>8</sup> Angold, *Church and society*, 252-6.

<sup>9</sup> E.g., Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I*, 465-9 (Manuel), 454-8 (rhetoric); A. Stone, 'Dorylaion revisited: Manuel I Komnenos and the refortification of Dorylaion and Soublaion in 1175', *REB* 61 (2003) 183-99, Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine culture*, 171, 257 (Turks).

<sup>10</sup> Angold, *Church and society*, 193-5; Kazhdan and Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine literature*, 115, 121, 138, 140-1; Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, 315.

<sup>11</sup> Angold, *Church and society*, 201-3; Stadtmüller, *Michael Choniates*, 161-4.

that inevitably positions Malakes as auxiliary to the younger bishop.<sup>12</sup> Konstantinos Bonis published an edition of Malakes' extant works in 1937, with two additional speeches and extensive commentary published in 1949.<sup>13</sup> The editions are valuable, but Bonis' biographical introduction on Malakes adds only minimally to Stadtmüller.<sup>14</sup> In his commentaries, Bonis focuses much more substantially on the orations than the letters;<sup>15</sup> this emphasizes the rhetorical aspects of Malakes' career over the episcopal ones. In the 1960s, Jean Darrouzès discussed Malakes in a series of articles, including identifying three 'new' orations by the bishop.<sup>16</sup> However, Darrouzès' focus was primarily on the Tornikioi (especially Malakes' nephew, Euthymios Tornikes), rather than Malakes himself. He, too, focused on Malakes as an orator—though the discussion of Malakes' family connections to both the region of Neopatras and Constantinople are useful for framing the bishop as a figure occupying two worlds. Around the same time, Stergios Sakkos usefully examined Malakes' theological sympathies (more on this below)—a minor point in a larger theological and synodal study on 1166.<sup>17</sup> More recently, in the 1990s, Angold addressed Malakes within his profile of Michael Choniates,<sup>18</sup> but included little beyond what was relevant for that other bishop. Here he also suggested that Malakes' episcopacy was a sinecure, a view that may apply to Neopatras but does not fully fit with Malakes' activities in wider Hellas. Andrew F. Stone is the only modern scholar to give significant attention to Malakes, albeit once again to his orations only rather than career or biography.<sup>19</sup> As a bishop,

---

<sup>12</sup> Stadtmüller, *Michael Choniates*, 306-12.

<sup>13</sup> Euthymios Malakes *Εὐθυμίου τοῦ Μαλάκη μητροπολίτου Νέων Πατρῶν (Υπάτης): τὰ σωζόμενα*, ed. K. Bonis, 2 vols. (Athens 1937, 1949).

<sup>14</sup> Bonis, *Τὰ σωζόμενα*, 1:7-23.

<sup>15</sup> Bonis, *Τὰ σωζόμενα*, 2:55-91.

<sup>16</sup> J. Darrouzès, 'Notes sur Euthyme Tornikès, Euthyme Malakès et Georges Tornikès', *REB* 23 (1965) 148-67; 'Les discours d'Euthyme Tornikès (1200-1205)', *REB* 26 (1968) 73-75.

<sup>17</sup> S. Sakkos, 'Ο Πατήρ μου μείζων μου ἐστίν': ἐρίδες και σύνοδοι κατά τον ιβ' αιώνα (Thessaloniki 1968) 32, 63-4, 69, 73-4.

<sup>18</sup> Angold, *Church and society*, 201-3.

<sup>19</sup> A. Stone, 'Euthymios Malakes in theatron', *Byzantina* 30 (2010) 55-66 and continuing work.

Malakes remains relatively obscure.

Based on Malakes' extant writings—thirty-five letters, an unremarkable poem, and six orations—and those of contemporary authors, it is possible to reconstruct aspects of his career, both in Constantinople and Hellas. This information furthers modern understandings of Komnenian bishops by fleshing out a new partial portrait, à la Angold. Malakes serves as a fascinating simultaneous glimpse into both elite circles in Constantinople and a relatively minor see that otherwise appears infrequently within the historical record. Malakes demonstrates how a metropolitan might cultivate a reputation that transcended his see, especially as an orator and a vocal synod member. However, his interactions with fellow provincial prelates also highlight everyday administrative concerns throughout Hellas. This is useful as bishops served much longer in their offices than military or civil administrators and were therefore one of the most stable sources of authority in a province, as Judith Herrin has shown.<sup>20</sup> Malakes is also a clear example of an intermediary figure between Hellas and Constantinople.<sup>21</sup> As Teresa Shawcross recently demonstrated using Michael Choniates, this could be to the advantage of the provincial diocese as much as (or even sometimes more than) the interests of Constantinople.<sup>22</sup> However, Malakes' career offers more than corroboration of the nature of metropolitans and the provincial value of Constantinopolitan connections; his combined literary and episcopal activities helped promote his reputation and administrative reach beyond tiny Neopatras, into both Hellas more broadly and among the intelligentsia of the capital.

### Biographical Overview

---

<sup>20</sup> J. Herrin, *Margins and metropolis: authority across the Byzantine Empire* (Princeton 2013) 59-74, 88-91.

<sup>21</sup> For parallels, Angold, *Church and society*, 156-262; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I*, 177, 316-412.

<sup>22</sup> Shawcross, 'Golden Athens', 68-93.

While Malakes' biography must always be incomplete, his own works and those of his contemporaries provide some basic information. Michael Choniates implied that Malakes was from Hellas;<sup>23</sup> indeed, he may have hailed from Thebes, given his affinity for the city and the fact that his sister married into the Tornikioi, a family associated with Thebes and Euripos.<sup>24</sup> In his monody for Eustathios, Malakes called himself 'coeval and fellow student' (συνηλικιώτης καὶ σύντροφος) of the archbishop.<sup>25</sup> If he was the same age as Eustathios, he was born roughly between 1115 and 1135, and received his Constantinopolitan education no later than the 1150s.<sup>26</sup> Malakes evidently excelled at his studies: Niketas Choniates remembered him as 'a great man in letters', emphasizing the bishop's academic credentials.<sup>27</sup> Malakes then became known as an orator by autumn 1161, when he delivered a speech for Manuel I during Seljuq sultan Kiliç Arslan II's visit to Constantinople.<sup>28</sup> Magdalino assumes that Malakes was not yet metropolitan of Neopatras at this time,<sup>29</sup> which corresponds with Darrouzès' proposal that this particular speech was given by a patriarchal official (and, incidentally, one speaking before the emperor for the first time).<sup>30</sup> If so, this speech may have advanced Malakes' career, as he next appears, five years later, as a metropolitan.

Malakes' first definitive episcopal appearance was in 1166, when he debated the meaning of the biblical passage 'the Father is greater than I' (John 14.28) at a patriarchal synod. The

<sup>23</sup> Michael Choniates, *Michaelis Choniatae epistulae*, ed. F. Kolovou (Berlin 2001) 31.

<sup>24</sup> For Euripos, Darrouzès, 'Les discours d'Euthyme Tornikès', 50; the evidence for the Theban connection is limited, but historians have found it suggestive: Darrouzès, 'Notes sur Euthyme Tornikès', 159-60; Angold, *Church and society*, 201; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I*, 154.

<sup>25</sup> Malakes, *Τὰ σοφίζμενα*, 1:83. All translations of Malakes' writings are my own.

<sup>26</sup> Stadtmüller, *Michael Choniates*, 307; Kazhdan and Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine literature*, 115-21; R. Browning, 'Eustathios of Thessaloniki revisited', *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 40 (1995) 84-5.

<sup>27</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, ed. J. A. van Dieten (Berlin 1975) 331; *O City of Byzantium!* trans. H. Magoulias (Detroit 1984) 183.

<sup>28</sup> Malakes, *Noctes Petropolitanae*, ed. A. K. Papadopoulos-Kerameus (St Petersburg 1913) 162-87. Manuscript tradition attributes the oration to Euthymios Tornikes, Malakes' nephew and namesake, but Darrouzès makes a compelling argument, based on historical context, internal biographical clues, and rhetorical style, that the author was Malakes himself ('Notes sur Euthyme Tornikès', 155-8).

<sup>29</sup> Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I*, 454-5.

<sup>30</sup> Darrouzès, 'Notes sur Euthyme Tornikès', 157.

synod minutes record Malakes' presence and contributions there,<sup>31</sup> while historian Ioannes Kinnamos also noted the bishop in his account of the controversy.<sup>32</sup> Over the next decades, Malakes surfaces periodically: he endorsed the decisions of the patriarchal synod of 1170<sup>33</sup> and delivered at least five more orations. His dateable works include: a monody on the death of Athenian metropolitan Nikolaos Hagiotheodorites in 1175;<sup>34</sup> a second encomium of Manuel I at Epiphany 1176, celebrating the rebuilding of Dorylaion during the emperor's so-called 'crusade' against the Turks;<sup>35</sup> a 1176 monody on the death of Alexios Kontostephanos, Manuel I's nephew;<sup>36</sup> and a monody on the death of Eustathios of Thessaloniki, ca. 1195.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, Malakes delivered a third surviving speech to Manuel I;<sup>38</sup> the date of this work is unknown, although it predated the emperor's death in 1180. Magdalino proposes that Malakes may have performed it ca. 1176.<sup>39</sup> Malakes' correspondence also demonstrates some contact with imperial officials active during Manuel's reign, including Andronikos Kamateros and Leon Monasteriotes.<sup>40</sup>

Malakes' career continued past Manuel's death, too. In the 1180s, Malakes appeared in northwest Asia Minor, debating the nature of the Trinity with Kinnamos in the company of

---

<sup>31</sup> Τα πρακτικά της εν Κωνσταντινοπόλει συνόδου του 1166, ed. Sakkos in 'Ο Πατήρ μου', 146, 152, 164; Niketas Choniates, *Thesaurus orthodoxae fidei*, in *PG CXL* (Paris 1865) 241C, 252A, 269A.

<sup>32</sup> Ioannes Kinnamos, *Ioannis Cinnami epitome rerum ab Ioanne et Alexio Comnenis gestarum*, ed. A. Meineke, *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae* (Bonn 1836) 254; *The deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, trans. C. Brand (New York 1976) 191.

<sup>33</sup> L. Petit, 'Documents inédits sur la Council de 1166 et ses derniers adversaires', *Vizantīskīi vremennik* 11 (1904) 479-93, esp. 488.

<sup>34</sup> Malakes, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 154-62. Also see Darrouzès, 'Notes sur Euthyme Tornikès', 158.

<sup>35</sup> Malakes, *Τὰ σωζόμενα*, ed. Bonis, 2:20-46. Also see Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I*, 95-8 (historical context), 455-8, 466-8 (rhetorical context).

<sup>36</sup> Malakes, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 142-54; Darrouzès, 'Notes sur Euthyme Tornikès', 158-60. More on Kontostephanos below.

<sup>37</sup> Malakes, *Τὰ σωζόμενα*, ed. Bonis, 1:78-83.

<sup>38</sup> Malakes, *Τὰ σωζόμενα*, ed. Bonis, 2:47-54.

<sup>39</sup> Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I*, 466-8.

<sup>40</sup> Malakes, *Τὰ σωζόμενα*, ed. Bonis, 1:67-70. More on these men below.

Andronikos I Komnenos—who threatened to throw both men into the Rhyndakos River.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, Malakes corresponded with fellow churchmen Patriarch Theodosios I Boradiotes, Michael Choniates, and Eustathios of Thessaloniki, each of whom was active in the last decades of the twelfth century. Specific events and dates in Malakes’ life become hazier in these later years, although he survived to 1202 or 1204, based on his nephew’s funeral oration in his honour.<sup>42</sup> Some general conclusions emerge from this survey, which will be further explored below: Malakes was repeatedly associated with Trinitarian theological debates, appeared reasonably often in Constantinople and before emperors, and had contact with the Constantinopolitan elite, even (or especially) after his appointment to Neopatras.

### Constantinopolitan Connections

Neopatras itself was relatively insignificant in the twelfth century; the city, modern-day Hypati near Lamia, was a metropolis in the ecclesiastical sense, but not otherwise notable.<sup>43</sup> It ranked fiftieth among metropolitan sees and was therefore not even an especially important bishopric in the theme, let alone the empire.<sup>44</sup> However, Malakes’ sphere of influence far outstripped Neopatras, particularly as he maintained ongoing associations with Constantinople. He achieved this through his office, as when he sat in synods, through his reputation as an orator, and through a network of Constantinopolitan associates.

Malakes’ participation in the patriarchal synod of 1166 is documented in two places: in Kinnamos’ coverage of the event and in the official acts, preserved in both independent

---

<sup>41</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, 331.

<sup>42</sup> Stadtmüller, *Michael Choniates*, 312; Bonis, *Tà σφζόμενα*, 22-3; Euthymios Tornikes, ‘Les discours d’Euthyme Tornikès (1200-1205)’, ed. Darrouzès, *REB* 26 (1968) 76-89.

<sup>43</sup> Bonis, *Tà σφζόμενα*, 1:5-7; T. Gregory, ‘Neopatras’ in A. Kazhdan (ed.), *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Oxford 2005).

<sup>44</sup> Herrin, *Margins and metropolis*, 68, 93 n.13. For comparison, Neopatras ranked below Corinth (27th), Athens (28th), and Naupaktos (35th), though above Thebes (57th).



manuscripts and Niketas Choniates' *Dogmatike Panoplia*.<sup>45</sup> This synod convened in March 1166 to discuss the meaning of Jesus's statement 'the Father is greater than I' (John 14.28). The Trinitarian implications of the passage had caused a controversy in 1165 after Demetrios of Lampe, a Byzantine diplomat to the West, returned to Constantinople after exposure to lively western theological debate about the nature of the Trinity. Demetrios began to question the belief that Jesus could be simultaneously equal *and* lesser to the Father.<sup>46</sup> The issue was not academic for the Byzantines, however; it revived Christological disputes from earlier in the twelfth century that Manuel and his grandfather Alexios I had pushed the Church to deem heretical. Re-opening debate was therefore dangerous for the emperor: his status as the arbiter of orthodoxy could be at stake if the theological premises behind Demetrios' view gained ground.<sup>47</sup>

The elites of the empire, who also functioned as rival 'guardians of orthodoxy',<sup>48</sup> evidently sympathized with Demetrios enough that it alarmed Manuel I. The emperor tried to silence Demetrios' view lest it provide opportunity for political dissent;<sup>49</sup> when he was unsuccessful, he sponsored a public theological debate against Demetrios in February 1166. The winner was a Latin bishop, Manuel's advisor Hugo Eteriano, who won by explaining that in *humanity* Christ was lesser while in *divinity* he was equal to the Father, contrary to Demetrios' primary focus on the Son's divinity.<sup>50</sup> However, Hugo and Manuel's position remained contentious enough that the emperor induced the patriarch of Constantinople, Loukas

---

<sup>45</sup> On the manuscripts: Sakkos, 'Ο Πατήρ μου', 107-14; for a critical edition: Τα πρακτικά, ed. Sakkos, 120-80.

<sup>46</sup> P. Classen, 'Das konzil von Konstantinopel 1166 und die Lateiner', *BZ* 48.2 (1955) 339-68; G. Sideris, 'Ces gens ont raison: La controverse christologique de 1165-1166, la question des échanges doctrinaux entre l'Occident latin et Byzance et leur portée politique', *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* 24 (2012) 174-6, 180-1.

<sup>47</sup> Sideris, 'Ces gens ont raison', 182-90.

<sup>48</sup> Sideris, 'Ces gens ont raison', 188-90, which draws on Magdalino's 'guardians of orthodoxy' (*Empire of Manuel I*, 316-412).

<sup>49</sup> Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I*, 290. The minutes for the 1166 synod (*PG* CXL 201B-81B; Τα πρακτικά, ed. Sakkos, 120-80) do not mention Demetrios by name, but they clearly address the spread of his ideas. Also see Kinnamos, *CSHB*, 251-2; G. Thetford, 'The christological councils of 1166 and 1170 in Constantinople', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 31 (1987) 143-6.

<sup>50</sup> Thetford, 'The christological councils', 144; A. Dondaine, 'Hugues Etherien et le concile de Constantinople de 1166', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 77 (1958) 477-83.

Chrysoberges (r. 1157-69/70), to summon a synod. Niketas Choniates' *History*, in a hostile account, claimed that Manuel called the meeting in order to foist his (unorthodox) opinion on the Church;<sup>51</sup> Kinnamos, in a more pro-Manuel and anti-Demetrios version, suggested that the emperor called the synod as a last resort.<sup>52</sup>

Prior to the synod, many Byzantine churchmen were sympathetic to Demetrios. Kinnamos, in an anecdote meant to illustrate how persuasive Manuel was over the course of the controversy, notes that only the patriarch and six deacons initially shared Manuel's position—and that, of these, the patriarch accepted the imperial view only because he was cowed by the emperor.<sup>53</sup> Malakes was one of the clergymen, including many of the deacons at the Hagia Sophia, who disagreed with Manuel.<sup>54</sup> This group swore to avoid personal meetings with the emperor, as they feared he would browbeat them individually into changing their position.<sup>55</sup> Malakes, however, evidently *did* meet privately with the emperor, and after initial silence revealed the extent of clerical opposition. Manuel was furious and threatened to throw Malakes over a cliff for believing the emperor would be on the wrong side of orthodoxy!<sup>56</sup> Malakes' role here is notable: he clearly opposed the emperor's theology, to the extent of refusing to discuss doctrine at all and enraging the emperor. Faced with a clerical rebellion against his theological agenda, the emperor forbore violence and called a synod.

Malakes appears at the synod's March 2 session at the Great Palace. Manuel attended, too, along with multiple imperial nephews and officials, the patriarchs of Constantinople,

---

<sup>51</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, 211-3; trans. Magoulias, 120-1. For discussion of Choniates' hostile historical treatment of the 1166 controversy (in contrast to his milder theological treatment in the *Dogmatike Panoplia*), see A. Simpson, *Niketas Choniates: a historiographical study* (Oxford 2013) 42-5.

<sup>52</sup> Kinnamos, CSHB, 252-6; tr. Brand, 189-92.

<sup>53</sup> Kinnamos, CSHB, 253; tr. Brand, 190-1.

<sup>54</sup> Sideris, 'Ces gens ont raison', 190; Sakkos, 'Ο Πατήρ μου', 30-2.

<sup>55</sup> Kinnamos, CSHB, 253-4; tr. Brand, 190-1; Angold, *Church and society*, 83-5.

<sup>56</sup> Kinnamos, CSHB, 254; tr. Brand, 191.

Antioch, and Jerusalem, and thirty-six metropolitans.<sup>57</sup> ‘Euthymios of Neopatras’ was the twentieth-ranked metropolitan of those present. The bishops’ discussion survives; their interpretations varied over *why* the Father was greater than Jesus, depending on the exact relationship between Christ’s divinity and humanity. Malakes was one of sixteen metropolitan proponents of *kenosis*, the idea that Christ had been temporarily ‘emptied’ of divinity as part of the Incarnation.<sup>58</sup> This becomes evident in his testimony at the synod: ‘I think that this humble phrase, *the Father is greater than I*, thus speaks of the Only-Begotten in accordance with His speech and the rest of the more humble speeches given about Himself, clearly proving His condescension (οἰκονομίαν) and that He truly came into being as a human’.<sup>59</sup> That is, Malakes separated the divine and human natures of Christ in order to explain the greater/lesser dynamic. The remaining bishops offered their opinions; Manuel’s side finally won out, and the metropolitans were asked to endorse the lesser-and-equal interpretation.<sup>60</sup> Malakes agreed, though once again with the qualification that the text specifically addressed Christ’s *incarnate* humanity: ‘the bishop of Neopatras said that he added to the last phrase of his judgment: “assuming the created and come-into-being flesh, according to which He also suffered.”’<sup>61</sup> While the emendation helped to clarify that Malakes was not a Monophysite,<sup>62</sup> ultimately he still resisted Manuel’s theology.

The synod next met on March 6, when the bishops heard Manuel’s view and formally endorsed the decision from March 2.<sup>63</sup> Malakes was present and subscribed his name to the

---

<sup>57</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Thesaurus orthodoxae fidei*, PG CXL 236A-7B; Τα πρακτικά, ed. Sakkos, 141-3.

<sup>58</sup> Sakkos, ‘Ο Πατήρ μου’, 60-1, 63-4, 69; for *kenosis* also see Simpson, *Niketas Choniates*, 43.

<sup>59</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Thesaurus orthodoxae fidei*, PG CXL 241C; Τα πρακτικά, ed. Sakkos, 146. Translations of the synod texts are my own.

<sup>60</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Thesaurus orthodoxae fidei*, PG CXL 241C-9D; Τα πρακτικά, ed. Sakkos, 146-52. See also Petit, ‘Documents inédits’, 468-72.

<sup>61</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Thesaurus orthodoxae fidei*, PG CXL 252A; Τα πρακτικά, ed. Sakkos, 152.

<sup>62</sup> Sakkos, ‘Ο Πατήρ μου’, 69.

<sup>63</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Thesaurus orthodoxae fidei*, PG CXL 251C-61B; Τα πρακτικά, ed. Sakkos, 153-9.

judgment.<sup>64</sup> This ruling became part of the *synodikon* of orthodoxy on March 13.<sup>65</sup> The next session was March 20, when the bishops reconvened to enforce their ruling; here, Malakes was one of several figures asked to clarify and confirm their orthodoxy. Those who had endorsed *kenosis* were particular targets: five of the seven bishops who signed the clarification had supported *kenosis* during the synod.<sup>66</sup> Malakes agreed to sign.<sup>67</sup> Shortly after this, Manuel published an edict, codifying the decisions of the council into imperial law;<sup>68</sup> Malakes was present when this was read out.<sup>69</sup> After edict and *synodikon*, all that remained for the synod was to discipline a few remaining opponents; this occurred on April 6 and May 6. Malakes was present at the latter session, though his name does not appear on the list of signatories to the disciplinary decisions reached that day. While this absence on April 6 and lack of a signature on May 6 could indicate a lack of desire to punish the last dissenters, the similarly spotty records of his fellow metropolitans at these final sessions make this uncertain.<sup>70</sup>

Kinnamos and the synodal acts together highlight Malakes both as a metropolitan and a theological dissident. Malakes was one of the relatively small fraction of Byzantine metropolitans to participate actively in this synod.<sup>71</sup> Perhaps the inconsequence and peace of Neopatras enabled him to be absent from his see so (presumably) early into his episcopate; this could corroborate Angold's view of Malakes as a bishop without much to do in Neopatras.<sup>72</sup>

Once the synod was finished, any metropolitan's job would have been to bring the synod's

<sup>64</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Thesaurus orthodoxae fidei*, PG CXL 255A, 260B; Τα πρακτικά, ed. Sakkos, 155, 158.

<sup>65</sup> Petit, 'Documents inédits', 469; C. Mango, 'The conciliar edict of 1166', *DOP* 17 (1963) 320. For the ecclesiastical decrees, J. Gouillard, 'Le *synodikon* de l'Orthodoxie: édition et commentaire', *Travaux et mémoires* 2 (1967) 75-7; trans. Thetford, 'The christological councils', 157-9.

<sup>66</sup> Sakkos, 'Ο Πατήρ μου', 75; Simpson, *Niketas Choniates*, 44.

<sup>67</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Thesaurus orthodoxae fidei*, PG CXL 269A; Τα πρακτικά, ed. Sakkos, 164; V. Grumel, *Les regestes des actes du patriarcat de Constantinople* (Paris 1947) n.1064.

<sup>68</sup> Mango, 'The conciliar edict of 1166', 320-30;

<sup>69</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Thesaurus orthodoxae fidei*, PG CXL 273A; Τα πρακτικά, ed. Sakkos, 173-4.

<sup>70</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Thesaurus orthodoxae fidei*, PG CXL 269B, 276C, 281B; Τα πρακτικά, ed. Sakkos, 165, 175-6, 178-80; Sakkos, 'Ο Πατήρ μου', 100-1.

<sup>71</sup> Darrouzès, 'Listes synodales et notitiae', *REB* 28 (1970) 66-7.

<sup>72</sup> Angold, 'Church and society', 201. Although, as below, Malakes still remained active in wider provincial matters.

decisions back to his suffragan bishops, so that they too could endorse it.<sup>73</sup> A metropolitan was by nature an intermediary between the patriarchs and the suffragan bishops, the capital and his own diocese; by his presence, Malakes illustrates this function in action. Second, Malakes' role in this synod was more significant than that of the average metropolitan: he opposed the emperor's theology to the extent of being called out by name in both Kinnamos and the acts. Sakkos even calls Malakes a leader to the *kenosis* faction.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, Malakes' dissident beliefs bracket him not only with other metropolitans, but also with figures across the Constantinopolitan elites, e.g., Kinnamos' Hagia Sophia deacons, Niketas Choniates,<sup>75</sup> and the emperor's own nephew, Alexios Kontostephanos.<sup>76</sup> Malakes was not simply a metropolitan doing his duty, but also an active member of a significant opposition movement and invested in the debate. Indeed, his full endorsement of the emperor's view came only after this had become orthodoxy.

Malakes continued to toe the orthodox line when the debate re-erupted a few years later. Konstantinos, metropolitan of Kerkyra, a participant in the earlier synod, had never been happy with the emperor's position. In 1166, this bishop had stoutly disagreed with the lesser-and-equal theology but promised to accept whatever position the patriarch took.<sup>77</sup> When Chrysoberges died, Konstantinos reverted again. A second synod convened in 1170, with the emperor, new patriarch Michael III Anchialos, many high-ranking imperial officials, and forty-three metropolitans present. The primary purpose of this synod was to discipline Konstantinos for heresy; he was duly deposed and anathematized.<sup>78</sup> Malakes was not present at the formal

---

<sup>73</sup> Petit, 'Documents inédits', 472-3, 477-8.

<sup>74</sup> Sakkos, 'Ο Πατήρ μου', 64, 69, 75.

<sup>75</sup> Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, 212; trans. Magoulias, 120-1. See Simpson, *Niketas Choniates*, 43-4.

<sup>76</sup> Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I*, 217.

<sup>77</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Thesaurus orthodoxae fidei*, PG CXL 252B; Τα πρακτικά, ed. Sakkos, 152.

<sup>78</sup> Petit, 'Documents inédits', 474-6, 479-93; Sakkos, 'Ο Πατήρ μου', 84-94; Thetford, 'The christological councils', 146-8.

sessions, but he did subscribe to Konstantinos' unanimous January 30 deposition after the fact, along with all of the attending metropolitans. In this, Malakes was one of ten additional metropolitans to add their names to the decision.<sup>79</sup> The significance of Malakes' non-attending signature may indicate that despite his final position in 1166 he may still have harboured reservations about that synod's conclusions. Darrouzès proposes that either Malakes was not invited to the new synod or refused to attend on account of his earlier arguments.<sup>80</sup> It is certainly suggestive that so many of the bishops who signed the 1170 synodal acts without attending had opposed Manuel's views at the earlier synod. Five of the ten late signatories had been present in 1166, and of these four had been partisans of *kenosis*.<sup>81</sup> However, the late signatures could additionally be interpreted as these metropolitans' efforts to reaffirm their suspect orthodoxy to the synod by condemning Konstantinos.<sup>82</sup> As much as the metropolitans continued to uphold the 1166 judgment officially, this controversy had not entirely been settled.

John 14.28 continued to haunt Malakes: Niketas Choniates mentioned that Malakes and Kinnamos argued over the same controversial passage over a decade later, during the reign of Andronikos I. The story lacks details, as Choniates' goal was to denigrate Andronikos' explosive temper rather than to report the debate or to evaluate the emperor's orthodoxy.<sup>83</sup> However, given both Kinnamos' relatively sympathetic stance in his history toward the synod's ruling and Malakes' initial dissatisfaction with the interpretation,<sup>84</sup> it is once again possible that Malakes continued to question the synod's ruling privately even after signing his name to synodal

---

<sup>79</sup> Sakkos, 'Ο Πατήρ μου', 104; Darrouzès, 'Listes synodales', 79; Grumel, *Les registes* n.1112.

<sup>80</sup> Darrouzès, 'Listes synodales', 75-6.

<sup>81</sup> Sakkos, 'Ο Πατήρ μου', 60-1.

<sup>82</sup> His interpretation of John 14.28 had been different than theirs: Sakkos, 'Ο Πατήρ μου', 60.

<sup>83</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, 331; trans. Magoulias, 183.

<sup>84</sup> The date of Kinnamos' text is unknown, however, so it is unclear whether the historian maintained consistently sympathetic views on the ruling.

decrees. If so, Malakes provides a useful illustration of how bishops could officially promote the interests of the larger Church—or their own careers—over their personal beliefs.

Michael Choniates offers further evidence of Malakes' dealings in the capital, beyond the theological controversy. In a letter, Choniates called upon Malakes in Constantinople to intervene on behalf of a monk called Ephraim, formerly an abbot in Davleia, near Mount Parnassos, until a second monk ousted him—against canon law but with the permission of the emperor (likely Alexios III Angelos).<sup>85</sup> This incident emphasizes Malakes' presence in Constantinople as someone capable of influencing the regular synod or the emperor. In another letter, ca. 1185,<sup>86</sup> Choniates reminded a suffragan bishop that 'not only many bishops like us, but also patriarchs and emperors themselves value the goodwill and friendship of the bishop of Neopatras very much.' They specifically prized 'his prudence and wisdom and manifold virtue during every sitting synod'.<sup>87</sup> This description reinforces Malakes as a member of the ecclesiastical elite and as an important contact for his fellow provincial bishops; the Constantinopolitan activities could actually benefit the provinces. It perhaps also suggests that he participated in regular *endemousa* synods as well as major patriarchal ones.

Malakes certainly had access to the imperial milieu over the course of his career. He performed at least three orations before Manuel between 1161 and 1180. As above, two commemorated recent events: the visit of Kiliç Arslan II (1161) and the rebuilding of Dorylaion (1176).<sup>88</sup> The third, possibly also from 1176, responded to Manuel's recent *silentium* and made references to an upcoming military expedition, possibly Myriocephalon.<sup>89</sup> Magdalino suggests

---

<sup>85</sup> Michael Choniates, ed. Kolovou, 99, 94\*.

<sup>86</sup> Kolovou, *Michaelis Choniatae epistulae*, 61\*.

<sup>87</sup> Michael Choniates, ed. Kolovou, 25.

<sup>88</sup> Malakes, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 162-87 (1161); *Tà σωζόμενα*, ed. Bonis, 2:20-46 (1176).

<sup>89</sup> Malakes, *Tà σωζόμενα*, ed. Bonis, 2:46-54, especially 47-9, 53; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I*, 466-8.

that this address may have contained veiled snubs to the emperor's education and rhetoric;<sup>90</sup> for all that Malakes enjoyed repeated appearances at court, he could have a healthy scepticism for the emperor—as with Manuel's theology. Regardless of what Malakes may have thought of the emperor, oratory provided the bishop with a unique opportunity to enjoy the emperor's attention: the phenomenon of imperial encomia 'directly reflected the power of educated men to lobby the emperor in pursuit of their individual and collective interests', as well as allowing them to win honour from the court and literary elite.<sup>91</sup> The lapse in the dates between the first and second orations may be noteworthy, however: if, as Darrouzès proposes, Malakes fell out of favour after the 1166 synod,<sup>92</sup> it may have taken him until 1176 to recoup his position at court.

Andronikos I was unenthusiastic about Malakes' verbal skills,<sup>93</sup> but the metropolitan's appearance by the Rhyndakos River attests that he continued to have access to the emperor. Malakes held a certain cachet among the Angeloi as well, as evidenced by both personal connections and individual prestige. The metropolitan's brother-in-law, Demetrios Tornikes, was *logothetes tou dromou* under the Angeloi,<sup>94</sup> while Malakes appears with the title *hypertimos* in the later decades of the twelfth century. This was an honour likely bestowed by Isaakios II Angelos or his brother Alexios III.<sup>95</sup> The imperially-granted title elevated its episcopal holders in honour above that of their sees;<sup>96</sup> this was public confirmation that the emperors considered Malakes' connections and accomplishments to be more significant than his metropolitan ranking—and that he had overcome any lingering stigma left after 1166.

---

<sup>90</sup> Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I*, 468.

<sup>91</sup> Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I*, 427-34, at 427.

<sup>92</sup> Darrouzès, 'Listes synodales', 75-6.

<sup>93</sup> Above, and Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, 331.

<sup>94</sup> Darrouzès, 'Les discours d'Euthyme Tornikès', 86 n.18.

<sup>95</sup> Darrouzès, 'Les discours d'Euthyme Tornikès', 76 n.1; Kolovou, *Michaelis Choniatae epistulae*, 63\*.

<sup>96</sup> V. Phidas, 'The ecclesiastical title of "hypertimos and exarch"', *The Greek orthodox theological review* 44 (1999) 221-4; V. Grumel, 'Titulature de métropolitains byzantins: II. métropolitains hypertimes', in *Mémorial Louis Petit: mélanges d'histoire et d'archéologie byzantines* (Bucharest 1948) 160-4.



Determining Malakes' relationships with other Constantinopolitan elites is more difficult, especially as the evidence largely depends on one-sided extant correspondence.<sup>97</sup> Malakes appears to have had contact with one patriarch: a letter survives to Theodosios I Boradiotes, patriarch of Constantinople 1179-83. Here, the metropolitan congratulated Boradiotes for regaining his office after being temporarily removed in 1181.<sup>98</sup> The letter goes on to thank the patriarch for his personal prayers for Malakes' recovery from an illness and credits these for his return to health.<sup>99</sup> This may indicate a reciprocated relationship between the two, or it may simply be evidence of Malakes' aspirations to connect with a patriarch. There is, admittedly, no evidence of Malakes associating with any of the other patriarchs, despite Michael Choniates' allusions.

The connections between Malakes and aristocrats prominent in the military and civil administration are stronger and somewhat easier to corroborate. One associate was Andronikos Kamateros, *megas droungarios* under Manuel, an imperial relation, and member of a highly influential family at the time.<sup>100</sup> Two incomplete letters by Malakes to Kamateros survive; one playfully mocks the too-long lapses in their correspondence, while the other is a petition complaining about taxation and quips that the metropolitan expects financial relief only from the heavenly emperor, not from the emperor on earth. The former letter, while engaging in an epistolary trope, may suggest that there was some form of additional correspondence between the two men; the latter implies that Malakes hoped Kamateros would sympathize with his plight—

---

<sup>97</sup> See M. Mullett, 'The detection of relationship in middle Byzantine literary texts: the case of letters and letter networks' in W. Hörandner and M. Grünbart, *L'épistolographie et la poésie* (Paris 2003) 66-72.

<sup>98</sup> Malakes, *Tà σωζόμενα*, ed. Bonis, 1:66-7. For context, C. Brand, *Byzantium confronts the west, 1180-1204* (Cambridge 1968) 35-7.

<sup>99</sup> Malakes, *Tà σωζόμενα*, ed. Bonis, 1:67.

<sup>100</sup> For Kamateros' relationship to Manuel, Kinnamos, CSHB, 210; tr. Brand, 160. For the Kamateroi, A. Bucossi, *Andronici Camateri, sacrum armamentarium, pars prima* (Turnhout 2014) xx-iv; Simpson, *Niketas Choniates*, 26-9; G. Stadtmüller, 'Zur Geschichte der Familie Kamateros', *BZ* 34:2 (1934) 352-8.

and perhaps intervene with the emperor.<sup>101</sup> The nature of the relationship is not clear from the letters, but the two men certainly participated in the same intellectual and theological circles, which may have made him a useful contact. Kamateros was a prominent literary patron,<sup>102</sup> and attended the synods of 1166 and 1170.<sup>103</sup> Shortly afterward, he edited the *Sacred Arsenal*, an anthology of patristic texts that staunchly supported Manuel as an orthodox emperor against the Roman Catholic and Armenian churches.<sup>104</sup> Fascinatingly, Kamateros pointedly sidestepped John 14.28 and the synods in this text,<sup>105</sup> suggesting that these were not unquestioned victories useful to his purpose, despite the synods' favourable outcomes. Malakes' and Kamateros' lives and occupations overlapped in notable ways, suggesting that they would have known one another.

Another noteworthy aristocrat associated with Malakes was Alexios (Komnenos) Kontostephanos, Manuel's nephew. Kontostephanos was active in the mid-twelfth century. He attended the synods of 1157, 1167, and 1170; as above, in 1166 he also initially resisted Manuel's theological views. He led a military campaign against Hungary 1161-62 and was governor of Crete in 1167.<sup>106</sup> There is no extant correspondence between him and Malakes, but the bishop wrote a touching monody at Kontostephanos' death from illness in 1176, ahead of the Myriokephalon campaign.<sup>107</sup> This speech initially highlights Kontostephanos as a soldier,

---

<sup>101</sup> Malakes, *Tὰ σφζόμενα*, ed. Bonis, 1:69-70.

<sup>102</sup> Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I*, 344-5.

<sup>103</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Thesaurus orthodoxae fidei*, PG CXL 253C; Τα πρακτικά, ed. Sakkos, 154; Petit, 'Documents inédits', 479.

<sup>104</sup> A. Bucossi, 'Dialogue and anthologies of the *Sacred Arsenal* by Andronikos Kamateros: sources, arrangements, purposes' in P. van Deun and C. Macé (ed.), *Encyclopedic trends in Byzantium?* (Leuven 2011) 269-84; Bucossi, 'New historical evidence for the dating of the *Sacred Arsenal* by Andronikos Kamateros' *REB* 67 (2009) 111-30; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I*, 259-60. The text's critical edition is Bucossi, *Andronici Camateri*.

<sup>105</sup> Bucossi, *Andronici Camateri*, xxxii.

<sup>106</sup> Darrouzès, *George et Dèmetrios Tornikès*, 57-62.

<sup>107</sup> Malakes, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 142-54, esp. 145-6, 149; Darrouzès, 'Notes sur Euthyme Tornikès', 158-60.

fighting Turks multiple times and ‘unnatural barbarians’ in Hellas.<sup>108</sup> The latter was likely especially important to Malakes, whose roots and see were both in that province. Later, Malakes switches gears and commemorates Kontostephanos as a literary patron, lover of books, and friend.<sup>109</sup> Theodoros Prodromos reveals that Kontostephanos was his patron, too,<sup>110</sup> confirming the aristocrat’s literary interests. Interestingly, Malakes’ monody praises Kontostephanos’ surviving siblings as well as their dead brother;<sup>111</sup> the bishop may have sought to maintain the family as his patrons. A reference in Euthymios Tornikes’ monody for Malakes underscores that Malakes was successful in circulating his writings at some point in his career,<sup>112</sup> no doubt helped by some well-connected literary patron in the capital.

Two final known aristocratic contacts were Leon Monasteriotes and Demetrios Tornikes. Monasteriotes was a high-ranking judge to whom Malakes wrote at least one letter. Both likewise attended the 1166 synod.<sup>113</sup> Malakes’ sister’s marriage to Tornikes cemented the bishop’s ties to that family of prominent civil administrators, which included two *logothetai tou dromou*.<sup>114</sup> There is not enough evidence to flesh out these relationships in more detail, but it is telling that Malakes either associated or sought to associate himself with the imperial and aristocratic elite. These connections could reinforce the bishop’s personal pull in the capital—and his ability to exert influence in Hellas.

While metropolitan of Neopatras, Malakes’ life clearly outstripped his provincial see. Even early in his career, he travelled from Neopatras to participate in the patriarchal synods, and, according to Michael Choniates, perhaps later become influential in the regular synods. As part

---

<sup>108</sup> Malakes, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 142-5 (Turks throughout; barbarians at 145).

<sup>109</sup> Malakes, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 150-1.

<sup>110</sup> Prodromos, *Historische Gedichte*, ed. W. Hörandner (Vienna 1974) 444-8.

<sup>111</sup> Malakes, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 148, 153.

<sup>112</sup> Tornikes, ‘Les discours d’Euthyme Tornikès’, ed. Darrouzès, 79.

<sup>113</sup> Malakes, *Τὰ σωζόμενα*, ed. Bonis, 1:67; Niketas Choniates, *Thesaurus orthodoxae fidei*, PG CXL 253D; *Τὰ πρακτικά*, ed. Sakkos, 155.

<sup>114</sup> Darrouzès, *Georges et Dèmètrios Tornikès*, 35-9.

of his job, he debated orthodoxy in the capital and transmitted the synod's decisions out into his see—but the same could be said for any of Malakes' colleagues who had the time and health to leave their dioceses. What makes Malakes significant is the extent to which he threw himself into the theological controversies of the day, while also ultimately sacrificing his beliefs in favour of appearing orthodox; as such, he became both prominent and long lasting. Moreover, Malakes appeared with multiple emperors, performed oratory at court, and sought out high-ranking members of the imperial administration and Church, as well as well-known literary patrons. Malakes was not unique in any of this, but these experiences and connections enabled him to cultivate an enduring and distinguished career as both a metropolitan and a member of the capital's elite.

### **In Hellas**

Even as Malakes associated himself with Constantinople, he remained invested in his native Hellas. Beyond the metropolitan office, twelfth-century Neopatras itself was quiet, small, and poor.<sup>115</sup> In a sense, Malakes benefited from his lowly diocese, as it likely enabled him to spend more time in the capital than many of his peers.<sup>116</sup> Neopatras itself barely warrants a mention in his entire correspondence, but Malakes did not ignore his episcopal responsibilities. He was occupied with administrative matters ranging from taxes to suffragan bishops to supervision of monasteries, as well as less ecclesiastical concerns. Thessaly no longer faced the Vlachan revolts and Norman incursions of the later eleventh century, but Malakes did complain about bandits in the nearby mountains in his eulogy of Kontostephanos; Magdalino suggests

---

<sup>115</sup> Gregory, 'Neopatras'.

<sup>116</sup> Angold, *Church and society*, 201-3.

these may have been Vlachan highlanders.<sup>117</sup> More concerning to Malakes' episcopal career were the administrative power-contests that had become common in the region.<sup>118</sup> Malakes was one of many prelates in the theme of Hellas and Peloponnesos, which encompassed the area between Sparta and Larissa. His episcopate territorially overlapped with the authorities of various civil and military officials, and his metropolitan see was one of several within the theme. During the twelfth century, the number of bishoprics had actually increased,<sup>119</sup> meaning that Malakes was in an especially crowded landscape. His letters address common concerns shared by—and conflicts between—him and these other administrators. Furthermore, the letters demonstrate the means by which a provincial bishop with both local and Constantinopolitan connections could advance his own interests and the influence of his see, both through cooperation with and domination of his neighbours.

For all that Malakes had close ties with Constantinople, his relationships with lesser imperial officials in the provinces were strained. Taxation was an especially thorny issue, as it set the interests of the capital against those of the provinces. Malakes was frankly one of many bishops frustrated with taxes: Theophylact of Ohrid, Eustathios of Thessaloniki, and Michael Choniates all ran afoul of local tax collectors,<sup>120</sup> while Balsamon notes that Nikolaos of Amykleion resigned his see and became a monk rather than face such officials any longer.<sup>121</sup> Likewise, Nikolaos Mouzalon, archbishop of Cyprus 1107-11 repeatedly cited troubles with tax collectors and local officials before similarly abdicating and removing to a monastery (before

---

<sup>117</sup> Malakes, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 145; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I*, 133.

<sup>118</sup> J. Fine, *The late medieval Balkans* (Ann Arbor 1994) 33-8.

<sup>119</sup> Herrin, *Margins and metropolis*, 103-10.

<sup>120</sup> Angold, *Church and society*, 162-3, 191, 195, 204-5; Michael Choniates, ed. Kolovou, 68-70; Shawcross, 'Golden Athens', 81-2, 91-3; Herrin, *Margins and metropolis*, 75-7.

<sup>121</sup> G. A. Rhalles and M. Potles, *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων* (Athens 1852) 3:145; Angold, *Church and society*, 156.

later becoming patriarch of Constantinople 1147-52).<sup>122</sup> Taxation worries and skirmishes between competing provincial authorities were prevalent beyond Malakes' lifetime, too, as illustrated by the experiences of Ioannes Apokaukos.<sup>123</sup> Malakes' surviving letters include one to a tax collector, Bardas, whom the bishop accused of mercilessness and 'base covetousness for profits'.<sup>124</sup> Malakes claimed that the diocese's funds had been drained away by taxes, 'so that not three obols' remained.<sup>125</sup> While no doubt exaggerated for rhetorical effect, the struggle was real: the tax-assessments of the later twelfth century were flawed, leading to incorrect taxation and overly-heavy burdens on the people of Hellas.<sup>126</sup> In order to retain resources within his diocese and relieve the people under his pastoral care, Malakes stood up to Bardas and sided with his province against the servants of the capital.

However, Malakes had relatively few resources with which to resist Bardas: imperial officials had every right to collect taxes in Hellas.<sup>127</sup> Therefore, Malakes turned to his skill with words to persuade the official that he had gone too far. In a mixture of supplicating hyperbole and acerbic wit, he asked the tax-collector to 'withdraw your whips' and to give back the money he cruelly extracted from the people of Neopatras, so that they might redeem their homes—and so that Bardas might in turn might get into heaven.<sup>128</sup> Failing this, Malakes had one other option: as seen in his letter to Andronikos Kamateros, he could also sidestep the tax collectors and petition the imperial administration directly, a tactic also used by Theophylact and Michael Choniates.<sup>129</sup> While Malakes admittedly was not optimistic about relief in that letter,<sup>130</sup> the fact

---

<sup>122</sup> Angold, *Church and society*, 257-60.

<sup>123</sup> Angold, *Church and society*, 219-22.

<sup>124</sup> Malakes, *Tà σφζόμενα*, ed. Bonis, 1:49.

<sup>125</sup> Malakes, *Tà σφζόμενα*, ed. Bonis, 1:50.

<sup>126</sup> Herrin, *Margins and metropolis*, 75-6.

<sup>127</sup> Herrin, *Margins and metropolis*, 59-102, esp. 74-7 and 88-9.

<sup>128</sup> Malakes, *Tà σφζόμενα*, ed. Bonis, 1:50.

<sup>129</sup> Angold, *Church and society*, 163, 204-5.

<sup>130</sup> Malakes, *Tà σφζόμενα*, ed. Bonis, 1:70.

that he wrote about taxes with a man who had the emperor's ear suggests he attempted to alleviate his problems using his Constantinopolitan network. It is unclear whether Malakes obtained any help this way, but the conflict with Bardas illustrates the challenges facing a rural metropolitan and the ways in which he attempted to address these.

When a civil administrator was patently in the wrong, for example meddling in ecclesiastical affairs, metropolitans could use their official weight to resolve conflicts. In an incident recorded in a letter from Michael Choniates to Malakes, the metropolitans skirmished with a *protokentarchos*, a low-ranking regional military commander, over the appointment of an abbot at a monastery at Myrrinion. Malakes had removed the original abbot there because he had been a layman not a monk, and chose a more appropriate replacement. However, the reason for Choniates' letter was to inform Malakes that another rival abbot, backed by the *protokentarchos*, had ousted the replacement as soon as Malakes had left for Constantinople.<sup>131</sup> The matter dragged on, and Choniates finally sought help from Manuel, metropolitan of Thebes,<sup>132</sup> in whose diocese the theme's civil administration was based.<sup>133</sup> While it is not clear how Manuel resolved the conflict, perhaps he pressured the governor of the province in Thebes to command his underling to step away from the monastery. The system was far from perfect—after all, Choniates had been unsuccessful at using persuasion or other means prior to consulting Manuel of Thebes—but cooperation between metropolitans offered a way to double-up episcopal influence more effectively against rival administrators.

Taxation likewise brought provincial bishops together in sympathy, as illustrated in a pair of letters by Malakes to Konstantinos, metropolitan of Patras. Here, Malakes repeated the same criticisms as in the letter to Bardas, lamenting that both bishops were suffering at 'the illegal

---

<sup>131</sup> Michael Choniates, ed. Kolovou, 99. On *protokentarchoi*, Herrin, *Margins and metropolis*, 79-80.

<sup>132</sup> Michael Choniates, ed. Kolovou, 114.

<sup>133</sup> Herrin, *Margins and metropolis*, 61.

burden of government affairs and both the barbaric raids and Scythian foraging of our own brothers and neighbours, discharged wickedly by the tax collectors and the monthly or even daily tax-gathering'.<sup>134</sup> While expressing confidence that evildoers would meet their just deserts at the conclusion of his first letter,<sup>135</sup> Malakes' advice in a second was far more stoical. After another indignant discussion of financial troubles stemming 'from men uneducated and ignorant of God', Malakes concluded that his colleague must accept the situation as best he could. He reminded Konstantinos: 'Bear these things nobly ... knowing that a reward that cannot be taken away is dispensed by God to those who endure trials thankfully'.<sup>136</sup> In addition to reaffirming the tensions between Malakes and the local tax collectors, these two letters emphasize that such problems were widespread around the theme, in Patras as well as Neopatras. Again, these complaints were neither new nor unique, but the language of the letters confirms that Malakes was Konstantinos' ally against the civil authorities, with the bishops furthermore characterizing themselves as the more educated, reasonable, and righteous parties.

Malakes also travelled to other nearby episcopal sees, not just to Constantinople. Since his and Eustathios's schooldays, the two had maintained a long-standing correspondence as bishops,<sup>137</sup> and Malakes also visited Eustathios in Thessaloniki at least once.<sup>138</sup> One of Eustathios' letters also reveals that Malakes spent time in the Macedonian city of Servia,<sup>139</sup> a suffragan see of Thessaloniki.<sup>140</sup> It is unknown why Malakes was there, but as Eustathios was extremely ill at the time,<sup>141</sup> Malakes may have travelled to Servia professionally on the

---

<sup>134</sup> Malakes, *Tà σφζόμενα*, ed. Bonis, 1:52-3.

<sup>135</sup> Malakes, *Tà σφζόμενα*, ed. Bonis, 1:53.

<sup>136</sup> Malakes, *Tà σφζόμενα*, ed. Bonis, 1:54.

<sup>137</sup> Malakes, *Tà σφζόμενα*, ed. Bonis, 1:68-9, 75-6; Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *Die Briefe des Eustathios von Thessalonike*, ed. F. Kolovou (Munich 2006) 122-8, 169\*-70\*.

<sup>138</sup> Malakes, *Tà σφζόμενα*, ed. Bonis, 1:75.

<sup>139</sup> Eustathios, ed. Kolovou, 127-8.

<sup>140</sup> Kolovou, *Die Briefe des Eustathios*, 172\*.

<sup>141</sup> Eustathios, ed. Kolovou, 127-8.



archbishop's behalf, just as Michael Choniates had handled problems in Myrrinion while Malakes was absent. Again, the metropolitans cooperated and in doing so could reach beyond their own dioceses.

With so many different bishops in Hellas, however, professional tensions could arise. The hostile relationship between Malakes and Balsam the bishop of Euripos in Euboia is a case in point. Ca. 1185, Malakes sought to exert episcopal rights over some monasteries in Euripos, likely on account of a family connection to nearby lands.<sup>142</sup> Balsam complained that Malakes' encroachment was illegal, as Euripos was a suffragan diocese belonging to Athens rather than Neopatras. Matters quickly escalated. On the one side, Balsam championed his rights over Euripos using disruptive crowds who chanted 'the bishop is holy' to influence popular opinion in Athens;<sup>143</sup> on the other, Malakes accused Balsam of stealing from his own congregation, inflicting corporal punishment on churchmen and laymen alike, and breaking canon law.<sup>144</sup>

Michael Choniates, as metropolitan over Euripos, duly investigated the conflict and brokered peace. He seems to have upheld the rights of his suffragan, but also insisted that Balsam and the people of Euripos should honour Malakes for his merits and reputation.<sup>145</sup> The larger episode is obscure, but the two metropolitans' approaches to it are revealing. Malakes found it natural enough to extend his authority beyond the borders of his metropolitan see, perhaps especially given his familial ties to the area; as a local boy, his authority extended into the personal realm as much as the official. Furthermore, Malakes had no qualms about his actions: he denigrated both Balsam and Choniates when questioned, branding the former as a liar

---

<sup>142</sup> Kolovou, *Michaelis Choniatae epistulae*, 61\*; Darrouzès, 'Les discours d'Euthyme Tornikès', 50.

<sup>143</sup> Malakes, *Τὰ σφζόμενα*, ed. Bonis, 1:40, 72; Angold, *Church and society*, 202-3.

<sup>144</sup> Malakes, *Τὰ σφζόμενα*, ed. Bonis, 1:73-4.

<sup>145</sup> Michael Choniates, ed. Kolovou, 25-6; however, the letters do not discuss the result of the original conflict.

and the latter as a dupe.<sup>146</sup> Choniates, however, could not ignore Malakes' incursion into his suffragan's see and had to weigh a cooperative relationship with Malakes against his own metropolitan rights. By balancing these interests, Choniates, too, emphasized that personal pull could distort strict observance to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, a problematic reality in a province already riddled with competing authorities.

Malakes' overreach fits with his combination of local, imperial, and intellectual pull. Euthymios Tornikes, in his funeral oration for Malakes, memorialized his uncle as a notable orator and writer, as well as an active bishop visiting prisoners, giving alms in Neopatras, and presiding at the synod in Constantinople.<sup>147</sup> These depictions were almost certainly idealized, but the dual roles, intellectual and bishop together, were exactly what Malakes himself valued. In his own monody for Eustathios of Thessaloniki, he focused upon Eustathios as a consummate wordsmith and teacher who also provided strong leadership to Thessaloniki, and emphasized how intertwined the two professions were.<sup>148</sup> With such pragmatic and cultural authority,<sup>149</sup> as well as that of the episcopal office itself, a Malakes or Eustathios theoretically became a triple threat. With local influence via his family and connections to elite circles in the capital, moreover, it is unsurprising that Malakes might consider himself more influential than his see and his opinions weightier than those of some peers, even if he had lost out in the synod of 1166 and struggled to win against his various rivals in Hellas.

Twelfth-century metropolitans faced a landscape crowded with other prelates. They needed to advocate both for their sees and for themselves, especially in the face of competition

---

<sup>146</sup> Malakes, *Tà σφζόμενα*, ed. Bonis, 1:41-3, 73.

<sup>147</sup> Tornikes, 'Les discours d'Euthyme Tornikès', ed. Darrouzès, 78-80, 84-7.

<sup>148</sup> Malakes, *Tà σφζόμενα*, ed. Bonis, 1:70, 80, 82.

<sup>149</sup> E.g., C. Rapp, *Holy bishops in late antiquity: the nature of Christian leadership in an age of transition* (Berkeley 2005) 23-55, 178-82.

with local civil authorities.<sup>150</sup> While Malakes' provincial actions are less opaque than those in Constantinople, the bishop was certainly both busy within Hellas and vigorous in his assertion of authority there, even if sometimes this was not strictly warranted. Malakes used rhetoric, the significance of his office, experiences, personal and aspirant network, and education to enhance his prestige amid his local struggles. Moreover, as much as Malakes engaged in rivalries with other administrative and ecclesiastical figures, he also clearly worked with his fellow metropolitans to advance shared agendas or to resist common threats. Malakes is not alone in either his experiences or his role as a capital-trained metropolitan, but his combination of powerful local connections and Constantinopolitan prestige speak to the uniquely influential role he was able to play despite his appointment to a relatively minor see. In fact, his see itself hardly enters the picture: Malakes' field is Hellas and neighbouring areas as much as Neopatras. Ultimately, Malakes' see seemed to have allowed him to balance his intellectual and synodal career in the capital at the same time as he continued to immerse himself in local controversies and contests. He may have often been absent from Neopatras, but he was quite active as a provincial metropolitan.

### Conclusions

While only some of his works survive, from the extant evidence, Malakes' career as a twelfth-century metropolitan enabled him to be an involved local administrator while also serving as a member of synods, an orator, and a part of the intelligentsia in the capital. On the one hand, Malakes' correspondence illustrates his role as a provincial prelate in contact with administrators across the region and invested in local financial and religious affairs. On the other, his speeches and the external references to him in histories and records produced in the capital

---

<sup>150</sup> Herrin, *Margins and metropolis*, 77-84.

attest to his continued activity among the highest ecclesiastical and imperial circles. Supported by an education that allowed him to move between these worlds, Malakes spent his career as an intermediary between capital and province, and Church and imperial government. His office was not necessarily a sinecure, however; though he absented himself from small, uneventful Neopatras, he remained engaged in administrative concerns and struggles in his home theme.

Within this combination of Constantinopolitan and provincial pursuits, both ecclesiastical and rhetorical, in many ways Malakes' career paralleled those of other bishops educated in the capital during the twelfth century. For example, while becoming archbishop too late to be involved in the Demetrios of Lampe affair, Eustathios likewise involved himself in theological debates with the emperor, as when he offended Manuel by vehemently objecting to a relaxation of the anathema against the Muslims' god in 1180.<sup>151</sup> Indeed, synods were inherently made up of provincial bishops, so Malakes' experiences echo those of many peers.<sup>152</sup> Furthermore, Malakes was not alone in maintaining an oratorical career after becoming a bishop: Eustathios, too, travelled and continued to give speeches before emperors, and maintained his academic career after becoming an archbishop.<sup>153</sup> Malakes' provincial concerns and actions were also largely in line with those of his colleagues. As above, he was in plentiful company with his complaints about imperial taxation. Moreover, Malakes was, again, not the only bishop to leverage his Constantinopolitan network to assist with problems within his diocese: Choniates used his connections to benefit Athens, Eustathios depended on the capital to quell unrest in Thessaloniki, and Georgios Tornikes called upon elite friends in the capital to help Ephesos.<sup>154</sup>

---

<sup>151</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, 216-8; trans. Magoulias, 122-3.

<sup>152</sup> J. M. Hussey, *The orthodox church in the Byzantine Empire*, 2nd edn (Oxford 2010) 318-23.

<sup>153</sup> Kazhdan and Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine literature*, 133-5.

<sup>154</sup> Shawcross, 'Golden Athens', 82; Angold, *Church and society*, 177, 180.

However, certain differences between Malakes' career and those of his peers are telling. First, while both Malakes and Eustathios travelled, including trips with no ostensible connection to their sees, some metropolitans remained extremely immersed in their sees, as with Michael Choniates.<sup>155</sup> Teresa Shawcross is correct to emphasize the provincial interests of metropolitan bishops,<sup>156</sup> though comparisons between Choniates, Malakes, and Eustathios indicate that local loyalties could vary in intensity. Malakes ultimately represents a metropolitan with significant interests in the capital, despite promoting and defending the people of his diocese. He may be a native son of Hellas, but his interests were split. This is not surprising, as the size and relative tranquillity of Neopatras meant that Malakes could be active in both places rather than sacrificing his authority in either. An 'imported' figure in a larger see, like Choniates at Athens, could not afford such divided attentions. Second, the (admittedly limited) surviving records of Malakes' career suggest that he did not encounter severe problems during his decades as metropolitan. While Eustathios faced a Norman occupation as well as hostility from the people of Thessaloniki,<sup>157</sup> and Choniates withstood a siege by Leon Sgouros and ultimately was forced out of Athens by the Latin Conquest,<sup>158</sup> Neopatras appears to have been relatively tranquil during Malakes' occupancy, barring relatively ordinary administrative tensions and minor raids. The experiences of bishops of less populous or significant communities would naturally deviate from those of major commercial or pilgrimage centres like Thessaloniki or Athens. Therefore, Malakes sheds light on what could be a less exceptional episcopal career and diocese—and one where he was as willing to cooperate with his fellow metropolitans as to challenge them, a situation sometimes overlooked in scholarship on administrative rivalries.

---

<sup>155</sup> Above; Shawcross, 'Golden Athens', 78-85.

<sup>156</sup> Shawcross, 'Golden Athens', 65-95.

<sup>157</sup> Kazhdan and Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine literature*, 134-7; Angold, *Church and society*, 180-90

<sup>158</sup> Angold, *Church and society*, 207-12; Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, 605-6; Shawcross, 'Golden Athens', 85-9.

The distinction between types of bishop and bishopric is important, especially given that fewer records survive for uneventful and relatively insignificant dioceses like Neopatras. Part of Malakes' historical value comes from the very obscurity of his see. Indeed, scholars know relatively little about many other contemporary metropolitans elsewhere in Hellas before 1204: Konstantinos of Patras and Manuel of Thebes corresponded with Malakes and Choniates respectively, but left little trace of their own careers. Malakes' history partially survives, however—likely because he made his name in the capital, as an orator, member of literary circles, and contentious theologian, in addition to his more than three decades as a metropolitan. Niketas Choniates and Ioannes Kinnamos alike remembered him by name in their imperial histories, while some of Malakes' writings survived after his death,<sup>159</sup> belying the experiences of many now-unknown provincial metropolitans.

Malakes' very combination of careers allows him to serve as an additional partial portrait of the activities of a Komnenian bishop, corroborating and expanding upon both the episcopal profiles in Angold and the understandings of episcopal rule in Hellas outlined by Herrin and Shawcross. He confirms the ways in which bishops could move between several roles, professionally and geographically, aided by literary credentials and elite connections. However, he is perhaps noteworthy in the degree to which he balanced his worlds: he was closely tied to Hellas *and* a notable figure in the capital. He used his handle on local affairs to allow him time in the capital while bringing that Constantinopolitan influence back to help him in Hellas. Despite his small diocese, tendency to infuriate emperors, and split attention between capital and province, Malakes emerges as an energetic provincial administrator, able yet circumspect theologian, and noted intellectual whose career lasted decades and transcended his modest see.

---

<sup>159</sup> For the manuscript history of the surviving works, Bonis, *Tὰ σωζόμενα*, 24-35.